



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

BALLAD AND EPIC.¹

BY WILLIAM HALL CLAWSON.

To the student of the relation between the popular ballad and the popular epic, Professor Gummere's succinct and comprehensive account of the popular ballad in the first volume of Professor Neilson's new series is of especial significance. The theory of communal origins which the author, convinced that it is essential to a conception of the ballad as an independent literary type, has made the dominating idea of the book, explains the ballad as having developed from communal verse by a constantly increasing tendency toward the narrative fulness of epic. By this indication in the ballads of a development towards epic, Professor Gummere creates a strong presumption in favor of the theory that the epic is an evolution from the ballad. He is confined, however, by the plan of his volume, to the ballad material alone, and he therefore emphasizes its communal features and does not trace the development of its epic features beyond the ballad limits. Dr. Hart, on the other hand, in his methodical, detailed, but highly readable and illuminating monograph, aims to establish the development of ballad into epic, and consequently emphasizes epic features of the ballad, omits discussion of communal origins, and studies epic as well as ballad texts for the purpose of showing that the former represent a later stage and the latter an earlier stage of the same development. The two books thus partly coincide and partly supplement each other: both show that the ballad has been subject to a gradual epic development; the former gives evidence to prove that this development originated in a stage of communal song; the latter makes it extremely probable that under favorable conditions this development ended in popular epic. Briefly to summarize and review this evolutionary conception of the popular ballad is the object of the present paper.

Professor Gummere's theory of communal origins, in which the genesis of this evolutionary process is explained, has never been so cautiously and yet convincingly stated as in his latest volume. Often absurdly interpreted as a belief that a considerable number of the ballads of Professor Child's collection were composed by assemblies of primitive folk chanting in unison, this much misunderstood theory; as here definitely expressed, simply amounts to a belief that the structure and form of the ballad as a type are the outcome of a long process of evolution,

¹ *The Popular Ballad*, by Francis B. Gummere (The Types of English Literature, edited by William Allan Neilson). Boston, Houghton, Mifflin & Co. 1907.

Ballad and Epic. A Study in the Development of the Narrative Art, by Walter Morris Hart. (Harvard Studies and Notes in Philology and Literature, volume ix.) Boston, Ginn & Co. 1907.

which began in the improvisation of verses by various members of a festal, dancing throng, and was continued by the imitation and elaboration of the structure and form of these verses by later singers and reciters. This theory is based upon the facts of communal composition and oral transmission and upon a study of the ballad structure.

Professor Gummere's initial statement of the problem of which his theory is put forth as the solution is admirably succinct and clear. He shows first (pp. 16-28) that communal composition, or the successive improvisation, by various members of a singing, dancing throng, of narrative lines or stanzas which are made under the stimulus and coöperation of the whole throng, which express ideas common to all, which are caught up and repeated by the throng and afterwards handed down by oral tradition of its members, and which are consequently the product and the property of no individual composer but of the throng as a whole, is a phenomenon well established by evidence from Southern Siberia, the Faroe Islands, and other isolated communities in various parts of the world, as characteristic of that stage of civilization in which the people are homogeneous and unlettered. He then points out (pp. 26, 28) that the popular ballads have been recorded, after a long course of oral tradition, from the recitation of humble folk who largely retain this homogeneous and unlettered quality.¹ The ballads, that is, have been transmitted to us by representatives of that stage of society which is known to produce communal verse. To this verse, moreover, the refrains of the ballads, their frequent repetitions, and their choral qualities, give them a strong resemblance; but, on the other hand, they have an artistic coherence and an æsthetic value impossible in popular improvisations. Two explanations of these facts now present themselves: "Either . . . the ballad . . . is originally a product of the people under conditions of improvisation and choral dance, but ennobled and enriched on its traditional course in such a way as to endow it with something of the dignity of art; or else it is originally a poem, made like any other poem, but submitted by tradition to influences which give it a 'popular' character. It is either the choice and glory of wild flowers or a degenerate of the garden."²

For the decision between these alternatives Professor Gummere relies almost entirely upon internal evidence. After pointing out, in a section stimulating and suggestive in its deft handling of a mass of literary and historical material, that owing to the lack of evidence earlier than the fifteenth century the question cannot be solved by tracing the ballad back to its original source, he proceeds to apply to the solution of the

¹ Professor Kittredge, Introduction to the Cambridge Edition of Child's Collection, pp. xxii, xxiii, gives evidence proving that the ballads were perpetuated by humble folk and not by minstrels.

² Pp. 28, 29.

problem the evidence of the ballad structure. In what is probably the most searching and illuminative analysis of that structure ever penned he makes it sufficiently clear that the ballad structure is a combination of choral, dramatic elements, which are a direct inheritance from communal composition and are supreme in the earlier stages of the ballad, and of narrative, epic elements, which gradually displace the communal elements and dominate the ballad in its later stages. He thus practically proves the first of the above alternatives, that the ballad is a product of the people, artistically developed in transmission.

The author's analysis of the ballad structure occupies the last three sections of the first chapter, and is illustrated and supplemented by the greater part of the second chapter and by the concluding passages of the third and fourth. This analysis, like all Professor Gummere's work, is replete with learning, insight, and literary charm; but owing, perhaps, to its very wealth of allusion, its multiplicity of subdivisions,¹ and its scattering distribution of passages on the same subject, the closest attention is necessary to follow the line of its exposition. When the line is once traced, however, everything falls into position, and the analysis stands out the masterly piece of work that it is. Briefly stated, its results are as follows:—

Structurally considered, the extant popular ballads may be divided into four classes. "We find ballads, and parts of ballads, where the text is really little more than a progressive refrain. We find ballads which combine this dominant choral structure with simple and straightforward but quite subordinate narrative. We find, again, fairly long ballads which are simply narrative throughout. And, lastly, there is the combination of certain narrative ballads into a coherent epic poem" (p. 78). The ballads of the first and smallest of these classes, of which "The Maid Freed from the Gallows" (p. 95) is the best example, usually have no refrain, because their text itself is a refrain with increments that advance the story; they tell this story not by narrative but by dialogue presenting a dramatic situation. This domination by repetition, this incremental and dramatic fashion of story-telling, are in such exact accord with the repetition and incremental dialogue of known examples of communally improvised verse, that there can be no reasonable doubt of the direct origin of these ballads, or at least of their structure, in communal composition. Professor Kittredge's demonstration² of the ease with which the American version of the above-mentioned ballad could have been improvised by a crowd, Professor Gummere's significant note that the European variants of the same ballad are all equally incremental and dramatic and all unmistakably connected with the festive

¹ Cf. pp. 78, 85, 110-111, 116, 119-120, 147.

² Cambridge ed. of *Child's Ballads*, pp. xxv, xxvi.

dance, are both striking confirmations of choral origins for this ballad and for the class it represents

Ballads of the second class tell a slightly more complicated story than those of the first class, and usually present it in a series of situations in incremental dialogue rather than in one. The characteristic dwelling of the ballad upon these situations, and its swift passage with scarcely a mark of transition from one to another, impart to the ballad movement a peculiar combination of rapidity and slowness, now first pointed out by Professor Gummere, aptly termed "leaping and lingering," and explained as a result of the ballad's choral, dramatic, and non-epic qualities and as a double proof of choral origins. The fact that the story requires more situations than one is, however, an approach towards epic; and the ballads of this class make an even more decided advance in that direction in the few stanzas of brief, subordinate narrative with which the dramatic and choral situations are prefixed, concluded, and occasionally combined. That this advance represents an actual development from the stage represented by the first class is shown by the resemblance (amounting sometimes to identity) of the incremental portions of the ballads of the second class to those of the first and to communal verse (see our author's study of the Low German "Hero and Leander" ballad, pp. 86 ff., 92, 93, 97-99, and of the riddle ballads, pp. 137-142); it is shown also by the displacement of choral and dramatic qualities by epic qualities in such fields as ritual (pp. 93-96) and anecdote (pp. 79-81).

After the class of "ballads . . . with dominant choral structure" and "quite subordinate narrative," Professor Gummere ranges the "ballads which are simple narrative throughout." Just here it is impossible to reconcile our author's divisions with his subsequent analysis. In the final section of chapter i (pp. 117 ff.) he describes those ballads in which incremental repetition, — the essential mark of choral structure, — "ceasing to dominate the whole ballad, now passes from general structural form into a sort of formula of situations or topics which have become traditional and recur as old favorites in the new narrative ballads." The ballads thus described cannot belong to the second class with its "dominant choral structure," nor to the third, which is "*simple narrative throughout*," and which can therefore contain no distinct trace of incremental repetition. There is a plain inconsistency here, which might have been avoided by inserting between the second and third classes a new division under some such title as "ballads predominatingly narrative, but with subordinate instances of choral structure."

In the ballads which would fall under this division the narrative interest is stronger than the choral tendency, and the combination of long incremental situations with brief narrative openings and transitions is replaced by a steadier narrative progression, more or less broken, how-

ever, by shorter incremental groups which are more or less conventional formulas for certain situations and topics. The incremental repetition of these formulas may appear "as necessary, effective expression of the situation" (i. e. "in a commanding motive or typical, important formula," e. g. the "climax of relatives" in "Lady Maisry" and "Clerk Saunders"); "as perfunctory mark of style, a mere manner, by no means inevitable" (though important as a clear survival of the old choral structure, as in "Child Maurice" and "Child Waters"); "and as the ballad commonplace" (i. e. "repetition without any reason save that it is remembered and applied appositely or grotesquely as the case may be," as in the repeated choice of three horses and the conventional journey of the "little foot-page"). These successive stages in the reduction and conventionalizing of an incremental repetition which nevertheless retains throughout its close resemblance to the incremental repetition of the choral ballads and of communal verse, this increase in emphasis on narrative, are strong evidence that the ballads of this division belong to a stage of ballad structure developed from the "leaping and lingering" stage which is represented by the second class.

"The ballads which are simple narrative throughout," which, under the arrangement just suggested, would become the fourth instead of the third class, are called by Professor Gummere the "chronicle ballads," and analyzed by him in his account, in chapter ii, of their two main divisions, the Border and the Robin Hood ballads. These ballads, unlike those of the first class, which were composed for singing and dancing, and those of the second and third classes, which were intended for singing, were meant to be recited for the entertainment of an audience interested in the story, and therefore usually lack the refrain originally an invariable accompaniment of the other classes.¹ They relate a straightforward story without breaks, have the merest traces of incremental repetition, and none of the "leaping and lingering" structure, and are completely dominated by the epic tendency. That they are a development, however, from the choral stages of the ballad, is evident from their derivation from the same popular tradition, from their similar range of thought and expression, from their impersonality, from the fact that there are a few border and outlaw ballads which contain incremental and dramatic as well as narrative passages,² and from the hints of incremental repetition which they still contain.

The fifth and last class of the ballads — "the combination of certain narrative ballads into a coherent epic poem" — comprises a single example, "The Gest of Robin Hood." As this poem is demonstrably made up from ballads of the preceding class, and as through its greater evenness and fulness of narration and its combination of independent

¹ See p. 74.

² *Lads of Wamphray* (184), cf. pp. 248-250; *Johnie Cock* (114), pp. 267, 268.

incidents it reaches a higher stage of epic development than any of the other ballads, it is undoubtedly the final link in the foregoing chain of evidence, from the ballads themselves, that they originated in communal composition and gradually evolved towards epic.

The foregoing analysis of the ballad structure thus practically establishes the first of the alternative theories of ballad origin, and emphatically contradicts the second. The main facts that it brings out are these: (1) A small group of the ballads derive their structure, beyond reasonable doubt, from communal composition. (2) The other ballads seem to represent successive stages of a structural development from the stage represented by the first class towards a stage of epic fulness. (3) Incremental repetition, which is the essential feature of communal composition, is "the fundamental fact in ballad structure," and occurs with a prominence inversely proportional to the strength of the epic tendency, in all the traditional ballads. (4) The gradual displacement of original choral by later epic impulse is in accordance with observed phenomena in ethnology and literature. These facts are quite inconsistent with the theory that the ballad "is originally a poem, made like any other poem, but submitted by tradition to influences which give it a 'popular' character:" they are fully and satisfactorily explained by the theory that the ballad is a narrative development from communal composition. Unless, therefore, some one — if he can be found — who knows popular literature more thoroughly than Professor Gummere can extend or disprove the facts, Professor Gummere's theory, which is the best explanation of those facts, should be unhesitatingly accepted.

Dr. Hart's monograph, as already pointed out, is an independent confirmation, and continuation to its outcome, of the evolutionary conception of the ballad set forth by Professor Gummere. The author's purpose is not only to trace the development, within the confines of the ballad, of epic qualities, but also to show that this development culminates beyond those ballad confines in actual epic poems. This task he accomplishes, as Professor Gummere largely accomplishes his, by the use of internal evidence. He chooses certain groups of ballads, — a number of ballads of choral structure, a selection of border ballads, a group of Robin Hood ballads, the ballad of "Adam Bell," the "Gest of Robin Hood," the Danish and English heroic ballads, and finally two epics, the "Beowulf" and the "Roland;" and by a detailed and extensive analysis of their structure and contents he shows that these groups of ballads and these epics represent successive stages of an epic development which begins in the choral ballads and ends in epic poetry.

Although Dr. Hart's analysis, which is not concerned with choral origins, does not, like Professor Gummere's, trace the degrees by which the ballad passed from predominatingly choral to simple narrative structure, it explains more fully than the latter author the subsequent

stages of the ballad's progress toward epic. It compares not only the structure and movement of the different ballad groups and epics, but also the phases of life and the motives represented by these documents, and their treatment of character, mental states, moral significance, and setting. This comparison shows that the ballad develops into the epic mainly by a process of *elaboration* (or growth from within) which involves not only the transformation (pointed out by Professor Gummere) of the "leaping and lingering" structure of the choral ballad into steady, continuous narrative, but also a more detailed description of the ballad personages and their surroundings and relations external and temporal, a more complex conception and more careful assignment of motives, and a tendency to go beyond interest in action for itself, "to regard it as conduct, to abstract character from it, to discover the states of mind which cause it or result from it, and to provide it with a background" (p. 289). This elaboration accompanies and no doubt results from a corresponding growth, from narrow isolation to national consciousness, of the breadth, dignity, and splendor of the phase of life which the documents reflect and from which they are sprung. Dr. Hart's comparison further shows, in agreement with Professor Gummere, that the ballad also develops into the epic by a process of *accretion* (or growth by the aggregation of independent incidents); but he goes beyond Professor Gummere in pointing out that this accretion results from the rise of an heroic figure embodying the ideals of a whole community (in the epic, a nation) as brought out by conflict with hostile forces, and that the cyclic development of independent ballads about such a figure naturally finds issue in the combination of these ballads to form a long, connected narrative; he also goes beyond Professor Gummere in showing that such accretion, unaccompanied by elaboration, could not result in epic, and that elaboration, which by itself can expand a ballad to epic length and dignity, is consequently the more important process of the two. It is in his reduction of the whole evolutionary progress of the ballad to these two processes of elaboration and accretion, his indication of the causes and relative significance of each, and his demonstration, by the fact of their constant growth in ballad and fuller development in epic, of the organic connection between the two types, that the highest worth and originality of his monograph consists.

The results of Dr. Hart's analysis upon which the above conclusions are based may be briefly summarized as follows: The seventy-two "simple ballads" with which the analysis begins, and which, in the light of Professor Gummere's results, may be defined as ballads of the first three structural classes,¹ containing unmistakable choral elements, present a small, isolated group of characters, with only slight external and temporal relations, and actuated by a few primal, uncomplicated

¹ See above, p. 351.

motives; as Professor Gummere has already pointed out, their structure is a combination of "leaping and lingering," of dramatic and incremental situations or incremental formulas, and more or less abrupt, broken narrative; finally, they are mainly interested in action alone, and make few or no descriptions of character, mental states, moral significance, or the setting in which the action takes place.

The Border ballads, of which fourteen characteristic examples are next analyzed, and which belong to Professor Gummere's¹ fourth class, — "ballads which are simple narrative throughout," — replace the small, isolated group by a large number of persons, members of a tribe or clan, connected by geographical and by temporal relations with the external world, and actuated by motives as simple as those of the "simple ballads." In the Border ballads, as Professor Gummere has indicated, the "leaping and lingering" movement yields to a steady narrative progression, attained by the suppression of incremental repetition, the supplying of transitions, and the elaboration of the story by the addition of preliminary, concluding, and subordinate incidents. By their conception of the border hero as a type of character, and their extensive use of place-names as a background for the action, these ballads surpass the "simple ballads" in the description of character and setting. All these differences, taken with the similarities noted by Gummere and Hart, prove that the Border ballads are a development towards epic from the stage of the "simple ballads."

The seven traditional Robin Hood ballads next analyzed voice the feelings, not of an isolated group or clan, but of the whole peasant class, which, through conflict with the governing classes, has gained self-consciousness and found self-expression in the creation of an ideal type of character, — the outlaw Robin Hood. This character has become the central motive of a whole series of adventures which are embodied in a cycle of ballads.² In structure and narrative movement the Robin Hood ballads continue the steady narrative progress of the Border ballads with increased elaboration of the story and a new tendency to accretion, or the union of independent incidents. In the description of character and the indication of moral significance, these ballads, being based on character, are an advance over the simple and Border ballads; and in their pictures of the "merry greenwood" as setting or background of the action, they make a decided approach to epic.

The ballad of "Adam Bell, Clim of the Clough, and William of Cloudesly," next in order, is evidently a single survival of another outlaw cycle, very similar in its phase of life and motives to that of Robin Hood,

¹ See above, p. 353.

² Dr. Hast has shown, p. 67, that there is a hint of such a development in the Border ballads, where Hobie Noble — a typical border hero — appears both in the ballad that bears his name (No. 189) and in *Jock o' the Side* (No. 187).

but less expressive of class hostility, and less centred in a conception of character. It is more than three times as long as the average Robin Hood ballad; and this length is due partly to accretion, — to the combination in the ballad of two independent incidents, the rescue and the apple-shooting, — but more particularly to the elaboration of the story by the prefixing of the capture, the careful motivation of most of the action, and the attention to transitions. “Adam Bell” presents more characters than the Robin Hood ballads, though none so important as their hero; it also goes beyond these ballads in the indication of mental states and in detailed description of setting; but its main epic advance over them is in the elaboration of action.

The “Gest of Robin Hood” is a poem of 13,700 words, made by the juxtaposition and skilful working-over into a relatively coherent and consistent narrative, of a number of independent ballads of the Robin Hood cycle. This process of accretion, which is far more extensive and artistic than the mechanical union of incidents in “Adam Bell,” is accompanied by a less notable but important process of elaboration, which in the case of action does not go as far as “Adam Bell” (p. 292) or even the single ballad of the Robin Hood cycle (p. 75), but which in the extent and variety of the descriptions of character and states of mind, the notation of moral significance and the greater idealization of the woodland setting, approaches more closely than the cycle ballads and “Adam Bell” to epic fulness of detail. In fact, Dr. Hart’s analysis makes evident Professor Gummere’s statement (p. 270) that if the hero of the “Gest” had been national as well as popular, and if the “Gest” had been composed in an unlettered age, “it would have gone on its way to higher and wider achievement,” and have become an actual epic instead of “an epic in the making.”

In the heroic ballads, which are represented in Dr. Hart’s study by thirty-one Danish ballads from the first volume of Grundtvig’s “*Danmarks Gamle Folkeviser*” (Nos. 1-17 and 19-32, both inclusive) and four English ballads (Child, Nos. 59, 60, 61, and 211), the isolated group, the clan, the band of outlaws embodying the ideals of a class, give place to a complete society with a king and his warriors, a castle, some courtly ceremonial, strong national feeling, and definite relations to the external world, expressed in geographical references and details about ships, horses, arms, and armor. Love, valor, the supernatural, are here, as in the simple ballads, the motives of action, but they are made more complex and ennobled. Love is more intense and more refined, valor is inspired by national sentiment and united with cunning; and the conflict of motives is noted and emphasized, e. g. in “Bewick and Graham” (No. 211). The material of the heroic ballads — in other words, their phase of life and their motives — are thoroughly epic, and mark a very decided advance towards epic over all the ballads previously examined. It

is in this epic quality of their material alone, however, that they represent a later stage than the other ballads. Their structure and movement retain several characteristics of the simple ballads, for example, occasional incremental repetition, frequent refrain, and narrative omissions; their elaboration of a simple incident by breaking it into minor incidents or by putting a preliminaring incident before it is paralleled in border and cycle ballads; and their tendency to group about such a figure as Kong Diderik, or to combine independent incidents in a single ballad,¹ are rudimentary traces of a development analogous to that of the Robin Hood cycle and the "Gest." Their treatment of character is no more advanced than that of the Border ballads, and their discussion of mental states, moral significance, and setting does not even advance as far. To put it briefly, the heroic ballads consist of the material of epic presented in a ballad style less advanced in elaboration and accretion than the simpler material of the cycle and Gest of Robin Hood.

In his elaborate studies of the "Beowulf" and the "Roland," which are of value to all readers of these poems, whether they are interested in ballad evolution or not, Dr. Hart's main purpose is to show that these epics, greatly as they differ from the ballads, and earlier as they are in date, represent later and more advanced stages of the matter and the methods from and by which the ballads were produced. His analysis shows that the "Beowulf" deals with a phase of life similar to that of the heroic ballads, but treats the details of court life and courtly ceremonial, of international relations, of seafaring adventure, and of arms and armor, with far more fulness and dignity, giving "a broad view of a highly organized society." The motive of the poem — the valor of a hero in conflict with hostile forces — differs from that of the heroic and cycle ballads in that the hero is national, and that his foes are more mysterious and terrible. In structure the "Beowulf" is, like the ballads, the product of elaboration and accretion; the elaboration, however, is far more leisurely, and includes a more detailed motivation, a fuller de-

¹ Dr. Hart has not noted a most striking case of the demonstrated combination of three short Danish ballads to form a longer one, pointed out by A. Heusler: *Lied und Epos* (Dortmund, 1905), pp. 41-46 ff. It has been shown beyond question that version A of the ballad of "Marsk Stig" (Grundtvig, D. G. F. iii, 338), a stirring narrative of adultery, revenge, and outlawry, has been made up by the accretion and elaboration of three independent ballads printed by Grundtvig as versions CDE, FG, and HI respectively (Jørgensen, *Bidrag til Nordens Historie i Middelalderen*, Copenhagen, 1871, pp. 113-134; Martensen, *Historiske Tidskrift*, 4 Raekke, 4, pp. 123-158, Copenhagen, 1873-74; Olrik, *Danske Folkeviser i Udvalg*, Copenhagen, 1899). Though only about one fourth as long as the "Gest," and decidedly closer to the simple ballad in structure, this *lange Vise* surpasses it as an example of accretion, in that its constituent ballads have been preserved. Though excluded, perhaps because based on comparatively modern history, from Dr. Hart's discussion of the heroic ballad (cf. *Ballad and Epic*, pp. 4, 110), it might have been effectively used by him as an interesting parallel to the accretive tendencies of that type of ballad and its retention of simple ballad qualities.

scription of phase of life, character, mental states, moral significance, and setting, and a more picturesque handling of transitional passages; and the accretion consists not only in the combination of two independent adventures of Beowulf, but also in the introduction of episodes; that is, of independent incidents narrated in brief subordinate fashion for the purpose of illustrating or amplifying the main narrative. This power of elaborating the account of a journey or of inserting and subordinating a Finn or Heremod passage, while keeping the main narrative steadily in view, is a distinct trait of the leisurely, finished epic, — a trait which produced the Homeric simile, and which does not exist in the ballads or “Gest.” The “Beowulf” also resembles the “Gest” in its power to treat coherently a complicated story and to foresee the end from the beginning, and surpasses it by its freedom to relate that story out of chronological order, thereby resembling the *Odyssey*. As a result of this leisurely interest in detail, and this power to hold the narrative in mind while elaborating or reversing it, the movement of the “Beowulf” is much slower than that of the “Gest,” and contains some repetition, which, however, is not communal, but varied and artistic. The dialogue of the “Beowulf” has more epic formality than that of the “Gest.”

In his analysis of the “Roland,” Dr. Hart shows that it carries farther than the “Beowulf” certain epic tendencies noted in the ballads, but that in other respects it is less advanced than the “Beowulf.” The “Roland” presents a more complex and highly organized society, with a more powerful king, a more brilliant and splendid court, and a wider national outlook, and gives more detailed descriptions of court ceremony, of the movements of armies, of dress, armor, and personal appearance. The central motive, the valor of the French in conflict with hostile forces, is more spiritual and idealistic, and more intensely and nationally patriotic, than the valor of the hero in the ballads and “Beowulf.” The “Roland” has greater structural unity than “Adam Bell,” the “Gest,” or the “Beowulf;” instead of combining a group of independent incidents, it presents a single incident, — the defeat at Roncevalles, — and develops it by elaboration into a poem longer than any of the three. This elaboration consists, as in “Adam Bell,” of the prefixing to the main incident of an exciting cause, here the account of the treason of Ganelon, and of the addition to the main incident of an account of the reprisals by which it was followed. The action is also elaborated, as in “Adam Bell,” by the multiplication of subordinate incidents, and by careful motivation; and this elaboration is increased by the complicated nature of the movements of the armies concerned in the fight. If accretion be also present in the “Roland” (for example, in the account of the death of Alde and the trial of Ganelon), it has been skilfully merged in elaboration; for these incidents, whether originally independent or not, appear to grow naturally out of what has gone before, and to be a subordinate part of the main action.

The "Roland" also shows evidence of the poet's grasp of an increasingly complicated story in its passages which refer to earlier and later parts of the narrative and in its narration of synchronistic events. On the other hand, the "Roland" is closer to the ballads than the "Beowulf" in its more frequent use of repetition, its less formal dialogue, its communal expression of emotion, its less complex presentation of character, its lighter treatment of mental states and moral significance, and, finally, its neglect of setting.

The results thus briefly summarized are of course far from demonstrating the theory that the epic is a development from the ballad. In their unmistakable indication, however, of a definite evolution towards epic in the matter and form of the ballads, and of evidence that the matter and form of two epics present later stages of a similar evolution, they certainly establish this theory as the most reasonable explanation of the facts. These results also show us how the development of ballad into epic, assuming its occurrence, must have been brought about. The epic cannot have been formed by the mere mechanical aggregation of popular ballads, and such ballads cannot be extracted from it by Lachmannian excisions; aggregation or accretion of ballads is bound to occur, especially when a popular figure gives rise to a cycle; but the result of such accretion would not necessarily be anything more than a long ballad. The essential factor in the development of epic from ballad is, as Heusler,¹ following Ker, has pointed out in the work already cited, leisurely elaboration, or the transformation of *liedhafte Knappheit* into *epische Breite*. To become epic the ballad must change its narrow, isolated group of characters, its interest in mere action, and its "leaping, lingering" structure, to a broad and detailed picture of life, a leisurely abstraction from action of character, mental states, moral significance, and a steady and complete narrative. It must relate an increasingly complicated, coherent, and well-motivated story; and although accretion is often a prominent factor in the formation of such a story, this accretion will, in the better-constructed epics, subordinate itself to elaboration, in that all external incidents will seem to have grown out of the central theme. The perfection of such elaboration, necessary to a finished epic like the "Beowulf" or the "Roland," seems to demand, as Professor Marsh² points out, a society of some wealth and splendor which has developed an aristocracy with leisure for the making and enjoying of such verse and the culture to appreciate it, and which at the same time has not outgrown its intellectual homogeneity, its devotion to ideals of action, and its memory of great deeds.

The way in which these elements probably combined to produce epics like the "Beowulf" and the "Roland" is shown by Professor Gummere,

¹ *Op. cit.* pp. 21 ff.

² Article "Epic Poetry" in the *Universal Cyclopædia*.

to whose book we must in closing turn for a moment, in his discussion of "Otterburn" and "Cheviot."¹ These poems, he shows, are Border ballads, but combine ballad impersonality and simple and hardy courage with an epic fulness of detail, an artistic use of alliteration, and a tendency to single out special heroes for praise, which suggests the epic style of the "Beowulf" and the "Iliad." They were composed, Professor Gummere thinks, by and for the warriors who had taken part in the battle, and were worked by a Border minstrel or minstrels into epic shape. In a similar way, he believes, warriors who had inherited from earlier communal days, and developed into greater narrative fulness, the gift of improvisation, sang their lay or *cantilène*,² reflecting immediate events; and these lays, an inheritance from communal song, were combined by scops, jongleurs, or minstrels, and subjected to repeated elaboration and re-working, until the finished epics were produced. It is thus to Professor Gummere's book, in which the beginning of the evolution of the popular ballad is explained, that we go for a definite account of its conclusion.

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., July 4, 1908.

¹ Pages 255-266.

² As Achilles sang *κλέα ἀνδρῶν*, the glories of heroes (*Iliad*, ix, 189).